



lyceclover

TEXAS AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE

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ALYCECLOVER

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DESCRIPTION

Alyceclover, *Alysicarpus vaginalis*, is a warm-season, annual legume that is grown primarily for hay. The leaves are oval to round, about 1 inch long and are borne along the entire length of the medium-sized to coarse stems that reach a height of about 3 feet with good growing conditions. The plants grow upright in dense stands but are low and spreading when the stand is thin. The blooms are rose to purplish, and the seed are borne in slender jointed pods. There are about 275,000 seed per pound. Alyceclover is native to tropical Asia. It was introduced into the United States in 1910 by the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

ADAPTATION

AREA of adaptation of alyceclover in Texas is primarily in the Gulf Coast Prairie and the lower part of the East Texas Timbers. These are areas where summer rainfall may be expected. Although the crop is seeded in early summer, it usually does not resume growth once it has been stunted by drouth.

SOILS best for alyceclover are deep, medium to heavy textured ones that are high in fertility and well drained. The clover makes poor growth on soils of low fertility, and it will not grow on wet land. The root-knot nematode attacks alyceclover and may severely damage the crop when it is grown for several seasons on the same land or when it follows other susceptible crops.

ESTABLISHMENT

Growers often are disappointed with alyceclover because of failure to obtain good stands. Favorable temperature, moisture and seedbed conditions; good quality seed and proper seeding are necessary for satisfactory stands.

TIME-OF-PLANTING for alyceclover generally is in May and June after the air temperature has been above 85 degrees for several days. The seed do not germinate readily in cooler weather.

SEEDBEDS for alyceclover should be firm, moist and free of weeds and grasses since the seedling plants cannot compete with other plants until established. Just before the alyceclover is seeded, new weed and grass growth should be removed and the soil firmed by cultipacking.

RATE-OF-PLANTING for alyceclover usually is 15 to 20 pounds of seed per acre. When temperature, moisture and seedbed conditions are favorable for establishment, 10 to 15 pounds of scarified seed will be enough to give an excellent stand. The seed are close-drilled or broadcast and covered not more than $1/4$ to $1/2$ inch. Where the soil surface tends to crust, the seed should never be covered over $1/4$ inch. The soil should be firmed again by cultipacking or rolling at the time of or following seeding. Alyceclover seed may be planted simply by pressing them into the soil by cultipacking or rolling, without covering. The seed may be inoculated just prior to planting with the same culture as used for cowpeas.

FERTILIZATION usually is necessary for good production. Alyceclover has a medium to high requirement for phosphoric acid and potash, and acid soils require liming for satisfactory production. A soil test is the best way to determine the grade and amount of fertilizer needed.

MANAGEMENT

HAY from alyceclover is of good quality when cut at the right stage of growth and properly cured. From 1 to 2 cuttings of hay usually may be expected, with total yields varying from 1 to 3 tons per acre, depending on growing conditions.

When 2 cuttings are desired, the first cutting should be made when the plants are 15 to 18 inches high. Alyceclover will make little regrowth after the first cutting if moisture conditions are unfavorable. Cutting at a later stage of growth will result in a higher yield for that particular harvest with favorable growing conditions, but cutting should not be delayed after the lower leaves begin to drop. The plants usually are cut, wilted in the swath and then windrowed, where they are cured until ready for baling.

GRAZING should begin after alyceclover is about 12 inches high. After the plants are grazed down, the livestock should be moved to allow the plants to make regrowth. Keeping the plants grazed closely likely will cause weeds to invade the stand. Alyceclover may be grazed down, the animals removed and the plants allowed to make regrowth for hay or seed; or the first growth may be taken for hay and the regrowth grazed.

WEEDS can be controlled by mowing. Weeds that appear during the establishment period may be mowed closely without serious damage to the alyceclover. When a heavy growth of weeds is mowed down, it should be raked off to prevent damage to the clover by smothering.

SEED may be harvested with a combine from the standing plants, although some seed will be lost by this method. To save the maximum amount of seed, the plants should be mowed when damp enough to be tough, cured in the swath and then picked up and threshed with a combine equipped with a pick-up

attachment. With either method, harvest should begin when about one-half of the seed pods are brown.

Seed yields range up to about 600 pounds per acre. The seed usually are fairly clean as they come from the combine. They should be spread and stirred frequently until thoroughly dry. Mowing and moderate grazing will stimulate branching, which results in higher seed yields when fertility and moisture are available for growth. When a seed crop is desired, the first growth usually is harvested as hay or grazed; and the plants allowed to grow in late summer and fall to produce seed. If alyceclover is not harvested as hay or grazed, the plants should be mowed about August 1 to stimulate branching and reduce lodging.

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